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“Hys worthy deedes might be eternized in the Bookes of memorie”: Syncretic Memory in Richard Johnson’s Chivalric Romances and Shakespeare’s *2 Henry VI*

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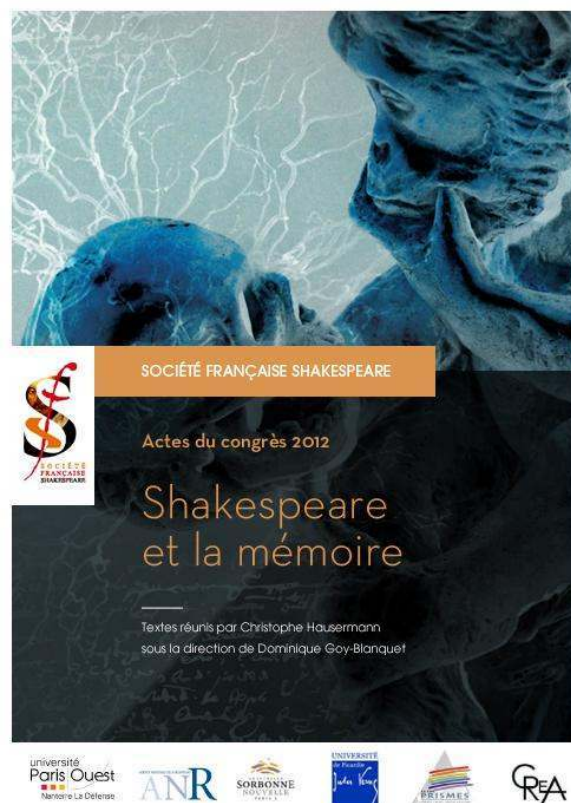
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**“HYS WORTHY DEEDES MIGHT BE ETERNIZED
IN THE BOOKES OF MEMORIE”:
SYNCRETIC MEMORY IN RICHARD
JOHNSON’S CHIVALRIC ROMANCES
AND SHAKESPEARE’S 2 *HENRY VI***

Christophe Hausermann

Shakespeare’s 2 Henry VI (1590) and Richard Johnson’s The Nine Worthies of London (1592) and The Seven Champions of Christendom (1596) are literary works focusing on famous historical figures, patron saints and heroic citizens. These two writers have revived the heroes of a glorious national past through the re-enactment of their high deeds. In Richard Johnson’s chivalric romances and Shakespeare’s history plays, the past impinges on the present in a literary longing for collective remembrance. This summoning of past acts of bravery makes use of nostalgia with a purpose.

2 *Henry VI* (1590) de Shakespeare, *The Nine Worthies of London* (1592) et *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596) de Richard Johnson sont des œuvres littéraires présentant des personnages historiques célèbres, des saints patrons et des bourgeois héroïques. Ces deux auteurs ont remis au goût du jour les héros issus d’un passé national glorieux en réécrivant leurs exploits. Dans les récits chevaleresques de Richard Johnson et dans les pièces historiques de Shakespeare, le passé empiète sur le présent dans un élan littéraire visant à instaurer une mémoire collective. Le rappel de ces actes de bravoure fait jouer la fibre nostalgique de façon délibérée.

Richard Johnson’s biography remains obscure.¹ In the dedication to *The Nine Worthies of London* (1592), he introduces himself as being “a poore apprentice”. Although Johnson spent most of his life in London, a place which is central in several of his works,² his name cannot be accurately associated with any livery company. This self-proclaimed “title” should rather be taken as an implied reference to his readership, mostly composed of London’s citizens, that is to say former apprentices.

His chivalric romances proved very popular and went through numerous re-printings throughout the seventeenth century. In *The Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596), Richard Johnson imagines the glorious deeds of the patron saints of England, Scotland, Wales,

¹ See Jennifer Fellows, ed, *The Seven Champions of Christendom, 1596-7*, Non-Canonical Early Modern Popular Texts, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003; Naomi C. Liebler, “*Elizabethan Pulp Fiction: the Example of Richard Johnson*”, *Critical Survey* 12.2, 2000.

² See *The Nine Worthies of London*, 1592, EEBO, British Library, STC (2nd ed.) / 14686, *The Pleasant Walkes of Moore-fields*, 1607, STC 14690, and *Looke on Me London*, 1613, STC 14676.

Ireland, France, Italy and Spain. In this prose romance, St George intends to “trauaile, not to furnish himself with any needful thinge, but to accomplish some Honorable aduenture, whereby hys worthy deedes might be eternized in the Bookes of memorie.”³ Richard Johnson gives his hero the opportunity to accomplish many high deeds to sustain his fame. First and foremost, St George kills a burning dragon in Egypt. During the fight, the champion thrusts his sword into the monster’s belly and is sprinkled with venom, which makes him fall onto the ground where “for a time he lay breathless: but yet hauing that good memorie remaining, that he tumbled vnder the branches of the Orringe tree; in which place the dragon could proffer him no further violence.”⁴ We might wonder what Johnson meant by “that good memorie remaining”. Did he imply that St George suddenly came to his senses and realized he had just been knocked out by the beast? Or was “that good memorie remaining” his own survival instinct? I would tend to think he meant by that the memory of previous heroic deeds achieved by legendary and historical figures, deeds which would in turn inspire other acts of bravery.

After slaying the dragon, St George saves Sabra, the King of Egypt’s daughter, kills two lions, remains seven years in prison, finally escapes and frees St David, the Champion of Wales, from Ormondine, an evil sorcerer. When entering the enchanted garden of the wizard, referred to as a “nigromancer”, St George finds a sword in a rock which he easily pulls free, thus redeeming St David from Ormondine’s enchantment. In this adventure, Richard Johnson has been necromancing, or “nigromancing” the Arthurian legend of Caliburnus, the magical sword, in order to create a mythical filiation with his own romance. Historical sources, legends and folklore are conflated in all his literary works to narrate the fantastic and far-fetched adventures of heroic figures. This is a syncretic story-telling where the gentry and the middling sort share the same chivalric values.

Johnson’s *Tom of Lincoln* (1607) is typical of his desire to mix local memory and national tradition. This romance narrates the adventures of Tom, the bastard son of King Arthur, and Angelica, the

³ *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 13.

daughter of the Earl of London.⁵ Tom becomes a Knight of the Round Table, wins a war in Portugal and visits an island of women led by a Fairy Queen, who begs Tom and his knight to give them their seed in order to repopulate the Fairy Land: "in such sort that the countrey was afterward re-peopled with male children."

The end of the sixteenth century saw the emergence of a middle-class readership composed of merchants and craftsmen eager for adventurous stories. Johnson drew his inspiration from the enduring appeal of chivalric romances among the middling sort in order to provide London's citizens with a memorable lineage of heroic champions. In *Praise and Paradox*, Laura Caroline Stevenson writes that

In order to praise the service of principal citizens, the [Elizabethan] authors turn London from a storehouse into a battlefield; they put merchants in armour and make them talk of 'duty', 'honour', and 'holy' loyalty to the king. [...] Episodes which could show that merchants have a dignified tradition of *mercantile* service are ignored; the authors wish to show that merchants have the same kinds of traditions as the elite.⁶

Financial service and commercial fortune were not enough to single out a merchant or a craftsman from the multitude of citizens that thrived in London's livery companies. In order to remain in collective memory, their lives had to be told from a different angle. To save some of these citizens from oblivion, Johnson resorted to fiction and encapsulated their alleged acts of bravery, thus turning them into landmarks in the history of England. In *The Nine Worthies of London*, he composed nine hagiographic biographies of some of London's most famous citizens: two vintners, two grocers, two merchant taylors, a fishmonger, a mercer, and a weaver. Johnson deemed these industrious Londoners worthy to be remembered and considered the task as his bounden duty. The full title of this work shows that it was aimed at "explayning the honourable exercise of armes, the vertues of the valiant, and the memorable attempts of magnanimious minds.

⁵ Richard Johnson, *Tom of Lincoln*, ed. Ryan Harper, The Camelot Project at the University of Rochester: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/TAL.htm>

⁶ See Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature*, Past and Present Publications, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1984, new edition, 2002, p. 113.

Pleasant for gentlemen, not vnseemely for magistrates, and most profitable for prentises.”⁷

Johnson drew his inspiration from the medieval tradition of *The Nine Worthies*,⁸ a group of champions including three pagans (Hector, Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar), three Jews (Joshua, David and Judas Maccabeus), and three Christians (King Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey of Bouillon). These Nine Worthies had embodied the ideal of courage and bravery throughout the Middle Ages. In England, pageants often presented their high deeds⁹ and William Caxton’s printings of *Godeffroy of Boloyn* (1481), *Le Morte Darthur* (1485) and *Charles the Grete* (1485) turned them into collective literary figures.¹⁰ Johnson’s own Worthies distinguished themselves through outstanding martial feats mimicking the heroic deeds of the nine original Worthies. Johnson not so much lied but rather embellished the lives of the middling sort in order to save some local figures from oblivion. In his introductory note, he explains that he took to the task of writing the lives of these Nine Worthies:

to reuiue what ignorance in darknes seemes to shadow, & hatefull obliuion hath almost rubbed out of the booke of honour. It is not of Kinges and mightie Potentates, but such whose vertues made them great, and whose renowne sprung not of the noblenes of their birth, but of the notable towardnesse of their well qualified mindes, aduanced not with loftie titles, but praysed for the triall of their heroical truthe: of these must you indite, who though their states were but meane, yet dooth their worthie prowesse match superiours, and therefore haue I named them *Worthies*.¹¹

⁷ *The Nine Worthies of London*, *op. cit.*, title page.

⁸ The Nine Worthies (Les Neuf Preux) first appeared in Jacques de Longuyon’s *Les Vœux du Paon* (c. 1310–12).

⁹ In Act V of *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, Holofernes presents a ridiculous pageant in which Pompey and Hercules replace Julius Caesar and Joshua. Shakespeare subverts the *exempla* of the Nine Worthies when the actors who embody them are mocked on the stage by Biron, Boyet and Dumaine. However, his aim is also to sharpen the blurred memory of his audience by correcting common misconceptions concerning historical figures. Costard recognizes he had “made a little fault in ‘Great’”, since he presented himself as “Pompey surnamed the Big”, whereas Holofernes explains Judas Maccabeus is not to be mistaken for Judas Iscariot. Through this pageant, Shakespeare shows how the moral value of a historical figure can be undermined by an inaccurate re-enactment.

¹⁰ William Kuskin has shown that “Caxton casts [*Godeffroy of Boloyn*’s] exemplary value as allowing a reproduction of the past that enables a lasting future”, “Caxton’s Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture”, *ELH*, Vol. 66.3 (Fall, 1999), p. 519.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, sig. B2r.

In *The Nine Worthies of London*, Johnson associates each citizen with a memorable deed which highlights his whole career. For instance, John Hawkwood, a merchant taylor, became the pope's mercenary, Henry Maleverer, a grocer, fought as a knight in the Crusades and became Jacob's Well's keeper, and Hugh Caverley, a silk-weaver killed a huge wild-boar in Poland. Richard Johnson begins his romance with the most famous of these worthy citizens: Sir William Walworth, a fishmonger who killed the rebel Wat Tyler at Smithfield during the peasant's Revolt of 1381:

Worthily had this father of his Countrey the formost place in this discourse, whose valerous attempts may be a light to all ensuing ages, to lead them in the darknesse of all troublesome times, to the resurrection of such a constant affection as will not faultor or refuse any perill to profite his Countrey and purchase honour.¹²

William Walworth's heroic killing of a peasant rebel serves as a beacon in the transient memory of Elizabethan audiences, which explains why it is mentioned in several plays.¹³ This glorious deed is enhanced by a visual and symbolic element, the dagger with which Walworth killed Wat Tyler. This weapon is still kept on display at Fishmonger's Hall as a commemorative pagan relic of a traditional past.¹⁴

The tales of these nine heroic champions are interspersed with discussions between Fame and Clio, the muse of history, who both praise the feats of these valiant citizens. Upon hearing the story of Sir John Bonham, a mercer who made peace with Solimon, the great Turkish emperor, Clio raises doubts as to the soundness of his story because it does not seem likely for a Turk to be converted so easily by a mere apprentice. Yet, Fame convinces her into accepting the reality of such strange and spectacular deeds without questioning their rationality:

I rather thinke you were amazed to heare such rare exploits procéde from a Prentice, and one of no more experience: but let not that seeme

¹² *The Nine Worthies of London*, op. cit., sig.C1v.

¹³ See Thomas Heywood's *1 Edward IV* and *2 If You Know not Me You Know Nobody* and Anthony Munday's pageant *Chrysanaleia: the Golden Fishing*.

¹⁴ Another mnemonic symbol, the commemorative statue of Sir William Walworth holding his precious dagger, carved by Edward Pierce in 1684, still stands on the Main Staircase of the Fishmongers' Company. See The Fishmongers' brochure, p. 18:

<http://www.fishhall.org.uk/Global/Pdf/Fishmongers%20Brochure.pdf>

straunge, hee spake no more then truth. [...] *Clio* blushed that shee had beene so inquisitiue: but as it may be coniectured, it was not so much for her owne satisfaction, as to take away hereafter all controuersie, and needlesse cauillation as might concurre by the curious view of such as shoulde fortune to haue the reading of her lines.¹⁵

In this passage, Richard Johnson invites his readers to a willing suspension of disbelief, in order not to question his historical truthfulness. It is not surprising that *Clio*, whose name comes from the Greek Κλειώ, “the proclaimer,” from κλείειν “to tell of, celebrate, make famous” has to rely on Fame’s words, even though the events she recounts might be dubious. In Elizabethan literature, historical accuracy tends to be superseded by the lure of the spectacular.

Johnson often resorts to emotionally striking scenes which summon up historical figures. He does not proceed through *reductio ad absurdum*, but *reductio ad factum*, the representation of a character being crystallized into a single memorable feat. This forged individual heroic trait has a clear mnemonic function which is quite similar to the “Von Restorff effect” in cognitive psychology. The “Von Restorff effect”, also called “isolation effect”, describes the mental process through which an item that stands out is more easily remembered than any other item.¹⁶ In Johnson’s chivalric romances, heroic characters are singled out because their high deeds create a cognitive bias that enhances the memory of the readers. Being transient, memory can easily be adapted to the needs of the present. In the blurred and non-hierarchical collective memory, high deeds may be preserved. This is not survival of the fittest but survival of the bravest. And although Richard Johnson’s works proved very popular in his life time, they unfortunately fell into oblivion and most of these local heroes came to be forgotten, except within London’s livery companies, which continue to feed the flame of remembrance.

In a similar and more lasting way, Shakespeare also embedded famous Britons in collective memory so as to fight against national

¹⁵ *The Nine Worthies of London*, op. cit., sig. E2r.

¹⁶ See “The Von Restorff Effect as a Function of Difference of the Isolated Item”, William E. Gumenik and Jerome Levitt, *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 81.2 (Jun. 1968), p. 247-252. This article questions W. P. Wallace’s assertion that: “the advantage accruing to an isolated item is obtained at the expense of other items on the list.” In drama, the same question arises since the process of singling out a particular character in a play might overshadow all the others and thus might impede the audience’s memory of minor characters.

oblivion. We have to keep in mind that many different plays were performed every week in each theater and every cast introduced dozens of new characters. In these conditions, the historical figures that were played on the stage could be readily forgotten. In Sonnet 60, Shakespeare laments the passing of time and the disappearance of past glories: "And nothing stands but for [Time's] scythe to mow: / And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand, / Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand."¹⁷ *Tempus edax rerum*, "time devours all things", but Shakespeare had the power to fight against oblivion by sustaining his audience's memory.

In *2 Henry VI*, Gloucester warns the peers of England against the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, claiming that it would erase the memory of their past military feats:

O peers of England, shameful is this league,
 Fatal this marriage, cancelling your fame,
 Blotting your names from books of memory,
 Razing the characters of your renown,
 Defacing monuments of conquered France,
 Undoing all, as all had never been! (l.i.95-100)

The play revolves around the question of fame and the danger of losing one's cultural heritage if it is not rekindled by heroic feats. Only ostensibly chivalric deeds have a powerful impact in British history and a long-lasting effect on the spectators.

Three characters in this play are so obsessed by their historical legacy that they take an active part in the staging of their pageant-like departing scene. The first of these historical figures is William de la Pole, the Earl, Marquess and first Duke of Suffolk, who acted as proxy in King Henry VI's marriage to Margaret of Anjou in Nancy in 1455. This was not much to be remembered for, especially in a play which has the biggest cast in the entire Shakespearean canon. After he has been banished to France for the murder of Gloucester, Suffolk is taken prisoner by pirates. Historically, Suffolk's ship was intercepted by a privateering vessel called the *Nicholas of the Tower* while he was fleeing to the Low Countries and he was beheaded as a traitor on 2 May 1450. In the play, Suffolk reminds his captors that he deserves to be treated according to his rank: "Look on my George – I am a

¹⁷ *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Walton-on-Thames, Thomson Learning, new edition, 2010, p. 123.

gentleman, / Rate me at what thou wilt, thou shalt be paid.” (IV.i.30-31). But the pirates do not consider the emblem of Saint George, the highest rank in the order of chivalry, as the sign of Suffolk’s merit. Suffolk is outraged when he realizes that his past deeds have so quickly been forgotten. Contrary to the Lieutenant of the pirate ship, he thinks he deserves to be remembered for what he has done for the realm:

Obscure and lousy swain, [...]
How often hast thou waited at my cup,
Fed from my trencher, kneeled down at the board
When I have feasted with Queen Margaret?
Remember it and let it make thee crest-fall’n, (IV.i.51-59)

Facing his own death at the hands of the pirates, Suffolk intends to die as a hero. In order to reinforce his glory, he first decides to turn his “obscure” captor into a worthy opponent by comparing him to a famous pirate:

This villain being but Captain of a Pinnais,
Threatens more plagues then mightie Abradas,
The great Masadonian Pyrate. (Q)

However, in the folio version, the cultural reference has been slightly modified as follows:

This villain here,
Being captain of a pinnace, threatens more
Than Bargulus, the strong Illyrian pirate. (IV.i.106-109)

It seems that Shakespeare has decided to change the name of his pirate in a later version of the play in order not to be accused of plagiarism by other playwrights. Abradas can be found in Robert Greene’s *Penelope’s Web* (1587) and *Menaphon* (1589).¹⁸ Shakespeare did not want to be remembered as an “upstart crow, beautified with [someone else’s] feathers” or an “[ape imitating] past excellence”.¹⁹ Therefore, he preferred to use another name for his pirate, which he found in Cicero’s *De Officiis*. The audience would not care about such literary borrowings, since they would remember neither Abradas nor Bargulus, but they would certainly be able to associate Suffolk with

¹⁸ See *2 Henry VI*, ed. Ronald Knowles, The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, Walton-on-Thames, Thomson Learning, 1999, “Longer notes”, p. 370.

¹⁹ See *Greene’s Groats-Worth of Wit*, 1592, University of Oregon, Renaissance Editions, 2000. <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/%7Erbear/greene1.html>

pirates. Thus, Shakespeare makes up for the fragmented memory of his audience by providing a simple and powerful image he can link Suffolk to:

Come, 'soldiers', show what cruelty ye can,
That this my death may never be forgot.
Great men oft die by vile Bezonians:
A Roman sworder and banditto slave
Murdered sweet Tully; Brutus' bastard hand
Stabbed Julius Caesar; savage islanders
Pompey the Great; and Suffolk dies by pirates. (IV.i.134-140)

In this play, Suffolk appears as a self-conscious character who attaches a great importance to his rank – when he introduces himself to Margaret in *1 Henry VI*, he first refers to his earldom²⁰ – and who chooses what he wants to be remembered for. Since slaves, bastards and islanders had already been associated with other famous figures in popular memory, he chose to make his mark by opposing pirates, who are always referred to as savages by Shakespeare.²¹ In that way, pirates become a mnemonic marker in the audience's memory. When using these far-fetched comparisons, Suffolk imagines that he will be placed next to Cicero, Julius Caesar and Pompey in the hall of fame of great men. But in spite of his efforts, he is bound to remain a secondary character outrivalled by the main protagonists of the Wars of the Roses.

In a similar self-fashioning effort, Jack Cade, the leader of the rebels, also chooses to model his fame according to his will. In Act IV, scene ix, Cade is killed by Alexander Iden, a Kentish gentleman, because he wants to steal a salad in his garden. Cade has trespassed a private property, an enclosed space, and as such he could be considered as a poacher.²² For his defense, the rebel explains that he has been suffering from hunger for several days while he was hiding in the woods:

²⁰ "An earl am I, and Suffolk am I called." (v.v.9).

²¹ In *Twelfth Night*, Orsino calls Antonio a "Notable pirate, [and] salt-water thief" (v.i.65).

²² Thomas Cartelli has underlined the importance of the class conflict in this "garden scene" as follows: "As befits the leader of a popular rebellion, Cade approaches his encounter with Iden from a thoroughly class-conscious and class-stratified position. For Cade, all possible relations between himself and Iden are construed in terms of the normative positioning of 'stray' and 'lord,' hence in terms of mutual suspicion and hostility." "Jack Cade in the Garden: Class Consciousness and Class Conflict in *2 Henry VI*," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, Richard Burt, John Michael Archer, eds., Cornell, 1994, p. 48-67.

Wherefore o'er a brick wall have I climbed into this garden to see if I can eat grass or pick a sallet another while, which is not amiss to cool a man's stomach this hot weather. And I think this word 'sallet' was born to do me good; for many a time, but for a sallet, my brain-pan had been cleft with a brown bill; and many a time, when I have been dry, and bravely marching, it hath served me instead of a quart pot to drink in; and now the word 'sallet' must serve me to feed on. (IV.ix.6-15)

Cade strangely insists on the word "sallet", which is repeated four times with two different meanings, a "sallet" being both a vegetable and a helmet with a long tail in the neck.²³ At first sight, Shakespeare's pun on the two meanings of the word "sallet" seems quite awkward in that scene. Cade's hunger might explain his need for a salad, but the sudden memory of the helmet seems irrelevant in this particular situation. However, we have to take into account the fact that the word "sallet" also ironically referred to a measure for a liquid,²⁴ probably because soldiers used them "instead of a quart pot to drink in". The sudden reference to the helmet becomes clearer when, feeling parched by the heat, Cade remembers that he used to drink from such a helmet to quench his thirst. Shakespeare's insistence on the word "sallet" has a rhetorical purpose: it is meant to associate Cade to a powerful image, so that the character and the word will remain linked in collective memory, as if they were the tenor and vehicle of a long-lasting metaphor.

In *All's Well that Ends Well*, Lafeu says about Helena: "'Twas a good lady, 'twas a good lady. We may pick a thousand salads ere we light on such another herb.'"²⁵ Thus, Lafeu separates refined herbs from vulgar salads as the wheat from the chaff. By associating Jack Cade with the word "sallet" Shakespeare seems to single him out among all his characters, but paradoxically, he also abases him to the condition of a thief. Therefore, the word "sallet" might be considered as a negative mnemonic marker in the play. Shakespeare presents the peasant rebel as a famished man, thus conveying the idea that rebellion can only lead a man to his own demise. Contrary to what Cade

²³ "In mediæval armour, a light globular headpiece, either with or without a vizor, and without a crest, the lower part curving outwards behind" (*OED*). The sallet replaced the bascinet of the Middle Ages and was replaced by the burgonet in the seventeenth century.

²⁴ "jocularly referred to as a measure for wine" (1.b in *OED*). The *OED* quotes Thomas Heywood's *1 Edward IV*: "Make a proclamation [...] That [...] Sacke be sold by the Sallet."

²⁵ *All's Well that Ends Well*, IV.v.13-15.

imagines, the word "sallet" was not "born to do [him] good," since his search for a "sallet" results in his own death.

One man's salad is another man's poison and one man's death is another man's fame. In that scene, Alexander Iden is proud to call himself "a squire of Kent" (IV.i.42), "the higher order of the English gentry, ranking immediately below a knight."²⁶ His killing of the rebel actually gives him the opportunity to accomplish a true chivalric deed:

Is't Cade that I have slain, that monstrous traitor?
Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed,
And hang thee o'er my tomb when I am dead:
Ne'er shall this blood be wiped from thy point;
But thou shalt wear it as a herald's coat,
To emblaze the honour that thy master got. (IV.i.65-70)

In the play, Iden's sword serves as a mnemonic marker that recalls, revives and renews the deeds of William Walworth, one of the Nine Worthies of London praised by Richard Johnson. In Anthony Munday's 1616 Lord Mayor's Show, *Chrysanaleia: the Golden Fishing*, Walworth is brought back to life and he reminds the Londoners of his heroic past :

And as my Dagger slew the Rebel then,
So to renown the deed; And I dare say,
To honor London more (if more it may)
The Red-Cross, in a Silver-field before,
Had Walworth's Dagger added to it more.²⁷

Iden's sword is an obvious reference to Walworth's dagger, which, according to Holinshed, is represented on London's Coat of Arms. One can hardly think about a better reminder for such a glorious deed. Both Iden and Walworth have killed a rebel and both have used their gory weapons as commemorative symbols for their heroic achievements, therefore establishing a symbolic descent between them.

As Jonathan Baldo²⁸ and Philip Schwyzer²⁹ have shown, memory is of the utmost importance in the shaping of a nation. The

²⁶ See 2 Henry VI, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

²⁷ Anthony Munday, *Chrysanaleia: the Golden Fishing: or Honour of Fishmongers*, 1616, EEBO, Guildhall Library, STC (2nd ed.) / 18266, sig. C3A5v.

²⁸ Jonathan Baldo, "Wars of Memory in Henry V", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 47.2 (Summer, 1996), p. 132-159.

²⁹ Philip Schwyzer, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales*, Cambridge, C.U.P., 2004.

past is always recaptured so as to exploit its political or moral value. This re-enactment of past deeds in literature and drama was all the more important since British nationalism had emerged in the sixteenth century. Philip Schwyzer says:

British nationalism captured the sixteenth-century imagination not only because it served the needs of the Tudor state and church after the Reformation, and not only because it was rich in the stuff of literary craftsmanship, but because it answered to a very deep and probably timeless desire: the desire to believe that the past can be recaptured, that what is forever lost may yet be found, that the dead may in some sense live again.³⁰

The repeated performances of history plays in London's theatres and the circulation of chivalric romances reactivated and stimulated the memory of London's citizens. Shakespeare and Johnson's unavowed aim was to retain and recall the heroic deeds of famous historical figures and worthy citizens in their works. Literature can be considered as *ars memorativa*, a bulwark against oblivion. In Richard Johnson's romances and Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI*, facts and fiction intermingle and result in a syncretic representation where neither facts nor imagination prevail. Both writers have created early modern "imagined communities"³¹ sharing the same historical and traditional references thanks to the re-enactment of memorable deeds.³² Johnson has immortalized nine worthy citizens while Shakespeare has recalled the lives of lesser historical figures: Alexander Iden, the Kentish gentleman whose bloody sword attests Jack Cade's murder and reminds the audience of Wat Tyler's by William Walworth; William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, who was murdered by pirates, and Jack Cade, who was killed because of a salad.

³⁰ Philip Schwyzer, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³¹ See Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1983, London, New York, Verso, revised edition 2006.

³² Historical re-enacting is still practiced today by enthusiastic "re-enactors":

<http://www.reenactor.net/>

These historical figures have been turned into *genius loci*, pervading spirits summoned from the past to endure in collective memory. After reading this paper, please use that “good memorie remaining” and endeavour to remember them.

Christophe Hausermann
Nancy